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# WHAT Satellite TV

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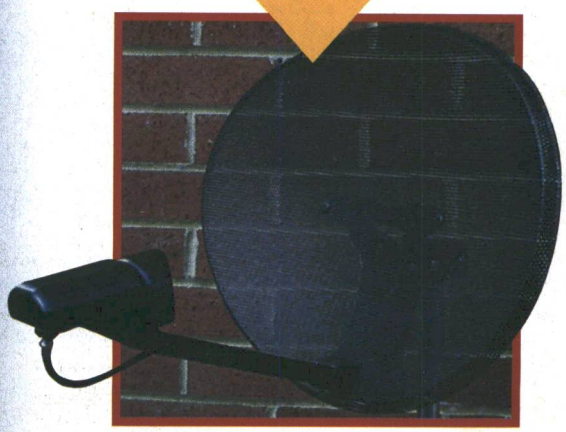
SKY DIGITAL EXPLAINED



**INSIDE:**

Digital receiver test, analogue receiver test, sex on satellite, Babylon 5

DIGITAL Experience Grundig Home Entertainment

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Grundig has been chosen as the supplier to manufacture the Sky Digital Satellite set-top box.

The new GDS200 digibox has been designed and built specifically to meet the demands of the new age of satellite broadcasting and is destined to become an integral part of the TV home entertainment system in homes throughout Britain.

So if your thinking digital, make sure you think Grundig.

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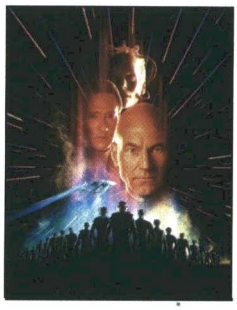
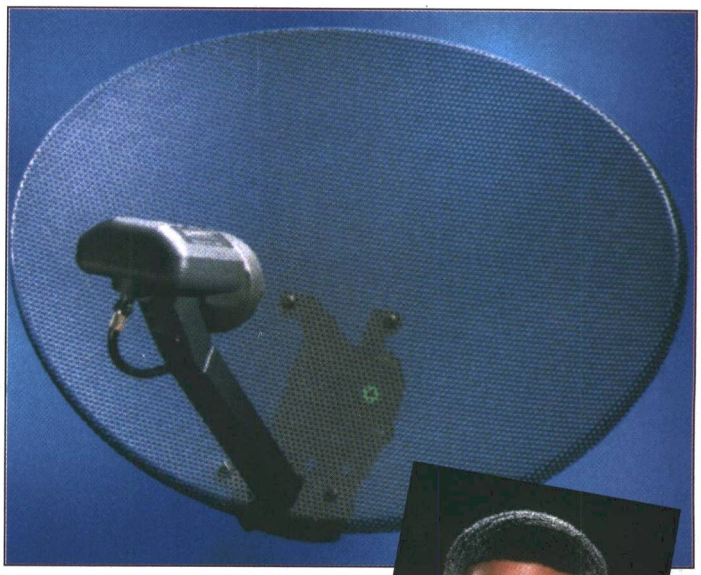


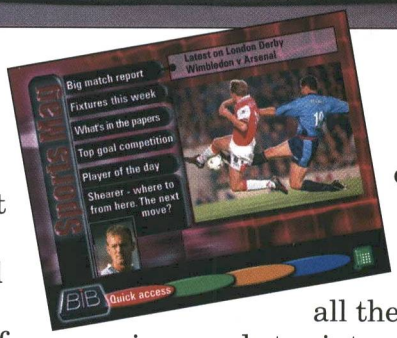


'What's all this digital TV revolution thing all about then?' That's the question currently doing the rounds in pubs, on buses, at work and in living rooms all over the country.

Digital TV will radically change the way we watch TV and give us an abundance of channels to choose from. This is all well and good, but the only way to truly enjoy digital TV in the future will be to turn on to satellite.

Sky Digital has already confirmed that 200 channels will be winging their way from upon high in October. That means yet more blockbuster movie premieres, hair-raising live sport and masses of general entertainment to get your teeth into.

The following pages will show you how digital satellite TV will work, how it will change our viewing habits, what equipment you'll need to watch it, how much it will cost, and the type of shows you'll be able to enjoy once you've got it all up and running.




One thing is for sure. This free taster of what's in store will have you fidgeting in your armchair with anticipation – it's all set to be a blast!

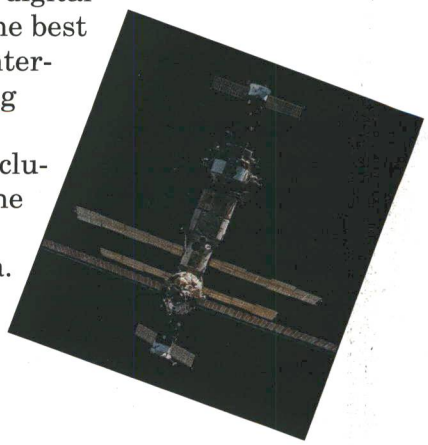
On top of this we also put a Nokia digital receiver through its paces and look at Grundig's highly rated analogue receiver. Analogue, we hear you cry? Just because the digital format is on the way it doesn't mean you have to toss out your old analogue system. We explain why.

There's also an extensive guide to sex on satellite (guaranteed to get your pulses racing) and a preview of the Sci-Fi Channel's space opera *Babylon 5*.

All this has been carefully selected from the archives of the country's leading satellite monthly – *What Satellite TV*. Every month we bring you all the news on what's happening in the satellite industry – and that means all the latest industry news, strenuous equipment tests, great competitions, an exciting home cinema section and all the best programme previews and star interviews.

We also bring you satellite TV listings of more than 65 channels – over 20 of them available for free!

In the coming months we'll be taking an exclusive look at Sky's Digital receivers, continuing our quest to bring you the very latest news and views on digital satellite, previewing the best in sci-fi and general entertainment, and whetting your appetite for Sky Sports' forthcoming exclusive live coverage of The Ashes cricket between England and Australia. Howzat!



Look to the skies,

What Satellite TV

# Digital D-day

***After months of waiting, Sky's digital service is finally set to start. Mark Newman takes a look at the line-up of about 200 channels***

Comedy, documentaries, erotica, drama, kids' entertainment, films, shopping and news... you name it, it's all here. Sky's digital package has something for just about everyone.

Consisting of 11 film channels, 50 Sky Box Office services, a dozen free-to-air stations, nearly 50 audio channels and dozens of general entertainment and à la carte channels, it's the largest digital package in Europe.

On the list are plenty of existing analogue channels, some of which are getting more transmission hours, plus a decent smattering of new ones.

## GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

Among these is US cable network E! Entertainment, which is dedicated to showbiz news and Hollywood celebrity profiles. Some of its popular shows like *E! Gossip* and *E! Uncut* have been broadcast on Granada Plus and Breeze for some time, but they'll soon be here around the clock. Also new is Irish channel Tara. It will offer a wide range of live news from Irish broadcaster RTE, plus popular Irish entertainment such as *Late Late Special* and even live hurling and gaelic football.

Up to five multiplexed versions of satellite's most-watched channel, Sky One, are expected to be offered by Sky Digital later this autumn, but for the September launch the existing analogue feed will be dual-illuminated in digital.

When the time-shifted services begin, fans of popular programmes such as *The X-Files* and *Star Trek: Voyager* will be able to see them again several times during the day, while morning programmes such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show* could be offered during the evening.

Many other analogue channels will also expand. The joint venture channels run by Flextech and the BBC will all be offered in the package. These include arts channel UK Arena, gardening and travel station UK Style (both new to satellite) as well as documentaries service UK Horizons. The group will also start UK-FM, their new rival to MTV, in the late autumn.

Alongside UK Gold will come a second version called UK Gold 2 which will broadcast similar programming to the existing channel, but whose schedule will be designed to prevent two identical programme genres (such as comedy) clashing. So when UK Gold is showing *Fawlty Towers*, UK Gold 2 will screen a drama such as *Brideshead Revisited*. A nice idea.

Flextech's wholly-owned channels will also be in Sky Digital's package. Bravo and Challenge TV will expand to 18-hour-a-day services, while Living will continue with its existing schedule. Bravo will have to tone down much of its 'lads' shows during the daytime to meet ITC regulations.

GSkyB's Granada Plus, Granada Breeze and Granada Men & Motors will all retain their current hours in digital – but the firm plans to extend the services with more hours and time-shifted schedules around November.

MTV's second channel, M2, which started transmitting its free-form music videos on the Internet during August, will go ahead with a proper TV launch in Sky's digital service in October. There will also be three multiplexed MTV feeds. Both the existing MTV and VH-1 feeds will also be simulcast on digital.

The Auction Channel, which held its first live TV auction on September 5 on Living, hopes to join Sky Digital in early 1999. The company says its delayed launch is not down to doubts about the take-up of Sky's digital package (it is highly optimistic about the service), but is because of problems in securing cable distribution.

Despite saying it had put the start of 13th Street: The Action And Suspense Channel on hold in August in protest at

the ITC's unbundling plans, Universal Studios has now given a green light to the UK launch of the channel in October. 13th Street screens crime, mystery and suspense-related drama serials and films for 20 hours a day. Sister channel Studio Universal, showing films, will also start later in the year.

Other general entertainment channels include Sky Soap and Sky Travel, which will both continue largely unchanged. [.tv], formerly The Computer Channel, will be given an extra two hours of TV time a day and this will include one-and-a-half hours' material rolled across four hours.

Nickelodeon, Fox Kids and Disney will all continue unchanged (although they hope to increase their hours later this year). Teen channel Trouble will expand to an 18-hour-a-day service from September.

## FREE-TO-AIR

Widescreen versions of BBC One and BBC Two will be among the terrestrial channels offered for free – although viewers will require a viewing card to watch them. Channel 4 and Channel 5 have both confirmed that they will be part of the package too; only ITV will be missing after it balked at the costs involved.

BBC Choice, the first new general entertainment channel from the Beeb in over 30 years, will air programmes to complement those on BBC1 and 2. Themed nights showing sci-fi output will also be featured occasionally alongside extra sports coverage. A third free station from the BBC's stable will be BBC Learning, to launch in spring 1999. It will offer shows aimed at parents, teachers and those developing skills.

Turner Broadcasting will also have a big presence at 28.2°E, showing the 24-hour versions of Cartoon Network and TNT Classic Movies, plus the existing feed of CNN International. The company does have future plans to offer other entertainment channels using its existing film output – possibly a TNT 2 – and the business news channel CNNfn, but they are unlikely to begin until early 1999.

News channels make up a significant portion of the free-to-air offering. There's the controversial BBC News 24, plus the existing feeds of Sky News, CNBC and Bloomberg UK. Rupert Murdoch's US-based Fox News Channel may also start later this year.

## DOCUMENTARIES

Documentaries make up one of the package's strongest genres, consisting of almost a dozen channels. This is largely due to Discovery's expansion of its services – both in terms of hours and new channels.

Discovery Channel's transmissions will be boosted from 10 to 18 hours daily, allowing it to air programming during the morning and afternoon. A time-shifted version of Discovery will also be launched to give viewers who missed a programme a second chance to see it later in the day when the schedule is repeated.

Discovery Home & Leisure's on-air time will also rise from seven to 18 hours, which will no doubt be welcomed by DIY-ers and fishermen. Popular shows like *Home Again With Bob Vila* and *Rex Hunt's Fishing World* will be now be shown in the digital service in the evening as well as in the mornings and afternoons.

A new addition (which will already be familiar to Hot Bird viewers) is pets 'n' wildlife channel Discovery Animal Planet. Its 9am-midnight schedule is split into eight programme strands covering pet care, natural history and factual programming in addition to family dramas and true life stories focusing on people who have special animal tales to tell. New from the Discovery stable will be three 'Showcase' channels based on existing US cable networks channels. These are Discovery Civilizations, Discovery Science and Discovery Travel And Adventure.

Discovery Civilization offers shows on topics as diverse as the pharaohs of Egypt to the King of Rock & Roll, and from the American Revolution, to the liberation of Kuwait. It 'takes viewers on journeys through epic events to meet the people who have shaped our world'.

Discovery Science aims 'to bring together the greatest minds in science as they investigate accepted truths and look for connections that may lead to discoveries'. From the depths of our galaxy to practical science in the world around us, the channel covers it all.

The third Showcase channel is to be Discovery Travel and Adventure. This offers weird and wonderful programming from all over the world.

Other documentary offerings include The History Channel, which will expand from four to 18 hours a day, UK Horizons, which will continue to broadcast the best of the BBC's documentaries from 7am-1am each day, and The National Geographic Channel, which will get more hours and start at noon each day.

● *Getting digital: you'll require one of Sky's digital receivers to reap the multiplicity of entertainment in store, such as Manchester United TV*

## SPORTS

Sky's existing three sports channels will be dual-illuminated in digital and the hours unchanged during September, however Sky does intend to add more hours and more channels during the coming months. The popularity of news show Sky Sports Centre has led to the launch of Sky Sports News, a 24-hour news channel. As well as hourly bulletins, the channel will have a daily breakfast show, *Good Morning Sports Fans*, providing overnight news, previews and weather. Fox Sports News from the US will be shown on weekday mornings followed in the evening by a live chat and news show. On Saturdays it will have a live football results service.

● *Dish of delights: the Sky Digital dish*

## FILMS

Sky says it will 'take the movie experience to another dramatic dimension' with the start of its revamped

## MUSIC CHOICE CHANNELS

Music lovers will warm to the foot-tapping line-up of audio channels being offered by Music Choice. Providing wall-to-wall music with no interruptions from adverts or DJs, they broadcast around the clock.

For those subscribing to the basic package of Sky digital TV channels, Music Choice will offer 10 *Basic Residential Channels* providing a wide range of music to suit most tastes.

The stations include Hit List, Generation Rock, Love Songs, Dance, Country, Jazz, Classical Favourites, Blues, Gold 70s & 80s and Easy Listening.

By spending an extra £4.99 a month, listeners can hear the complete Music Choice line-up of 10 basic and 34 *Premium Residential Channels*. These stations vary from opera and baroque to film themes and German Schlager.

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| 21 MS 20 U | 21" NICAM/FST/MULTI system, 16:9/NTSC P.back | £299.99 |
| 63 MK 69 DU | 25" NICAM/DOLBY PROLOGIC SUROUNF SOUND/9 Spkrs NEW PRODUCT | £499.99 |
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### DIGITAL DECODERS

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| 9200S | "Free to air" Media Master with 9600 software • LOW PRICE | £349.99 |
| | as above with IRDETO CAM • NEW LOW PRICE | £399.99 |
| 9500 | MEDIA MASTER "Modified d-BOX" NEW PRODUCT | £575.99 |
| CAMS | IREDETO, Italian, Dutch, German & Greek | £79.99 |
| | VIA ACCESS, TPS ABSAT & ARABESQUE | £89.99 |

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|---|---|---|
| HUMAX F1 | "Free to air" Digital Receiver NEW PRODUCT | £295.99 |
| HUMAX F1/C1 | 2 Card Common Interface/Auto Switching NEW PRODUCT | £399.99 |
| SKY DIGITAL | 200 Channels/Interactive Programs | £POA |

WE CAN ARRANGE SUBSCRIPTION TO MOST DIGITAL CHANNELS, WITH OR WITHOUT CAM, OR DIGITAL DECODERS, PLEASE PHONE FOR DETAILS.

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| VPH 6697 SENSAR | Audio Dubbing/ Satellite Control/ Insert Edit/ Auto LP/ PDC/ Auto Install/SENSAR/ Video Plus • LOW PRICE | £299.99 |
| VPH 2757 | Video Plus/Satellite Control/Non-stop viewing and recording/ Auto time set/NTSC Play Back | £199.99 |
| T 14 VB12B | 14" "VIDEOVISION" TV + Video Recorder Combi | £299.99 |

## POSITIONERS & MOTORS

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| SATWALKER POSITIONER FOR NOKIA D-BOX NEW PRODUCT | £89.99 |
| SATWALKER SW180 H-H SUPER SILENT MOTOR | £85.99 |
| CHALLENGER COMBI 110 Degree JACK & POLAR MOUNT | £79.99 |
| JAEGER SG99 H-H MOTOR | £79.99 |
| JAEGER 128G SUPERMOUNT H-H MOTOR | £89.99 |

## RECEIVERS & DECODERS

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| PACE MSS 100 | 250 channels + 3 scarts | £126.99 |
| PACE MSS 300 | 250 channels + 3 scarts/2 inputs | £168.99 |
| PACE MSS 500 | 500 channels + 3 scarts/ 2 inputs/positioner | £265.99 |
| PACE MSS 1008IP | 500 channels, integrated, Dolby Logic Surround Sound | £399.99 |
| PACE D155 | D2Mac Decoder, M&S | £179.99 |
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| CAMBRIDGE, GRUNDIG, APOLLO & EUROSTAR LNB's | £POA |
| EROS ENTERTAINMENT CHANNEL, 1 Years Subscription | £120.00 |
| PHILEX REMOTE ANGLE "8 in 1" REMOTE CONTROL NEW PRODUCT | £79.99 |

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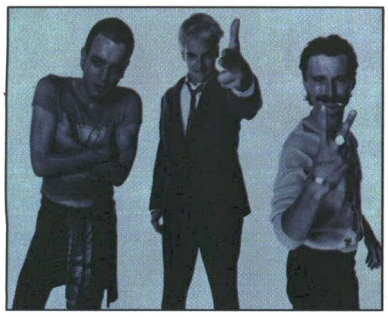


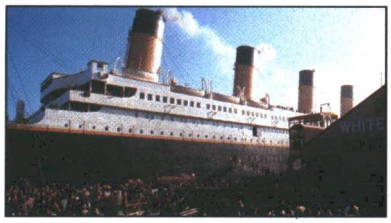
film offering Sky Multi-Screen.

The three core channels Sky Premier (formerly Sky Movies Screen 2), Sky Moviemax (Sky Movies Screen 1) and Sky Cinema (Sky Movies Gold) will be split up into a further eight 'screens', making 11 channels in all.

There will be four versions of Sky Premier, plus a widescreen service to allow viewers to see box office hits and first run premieres at all times of the day.

Four versions of Sky MovieMax will be offered – enabling subscribers to tune in for comedy, action and independent releases, plus women's TV movies during the daytime.

Sky Cinema will be split into two services showing 'timeless movie classics spanning five decades of film-making'.



By starting 11 channels, there will be multiple opportunities to see the films played on the core channels.

Start times will be staggered to ensure that there are at least five films beginning every hour across all 11 channels.

## A LA CARTE AND PAY-PER-VIEW

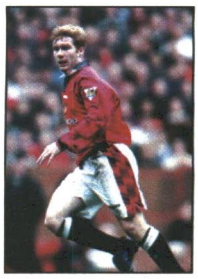
For those who don't mind spending a bit more, Sky Box Office will have much to offer. Its 50 channels will continue to present recent hits like *Deep Impact* and *Titanic* (at £3 a time), plus big sports events (boxing, Formula One Grand Prix racing, wrestling, music concerts and, in future, FA Premier League games). These channels will also be time-shifted with multiple showings.

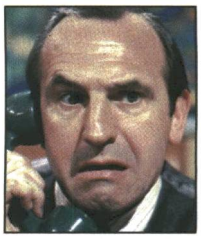
Other channels being offered on an à la carte basis include Manchester United TV, which will broadcast club chat, results, team news and interviews for six hours a day from 5-11pm.

A la carte services also include Jewish channel Shalom (from next May), Rainbow TV (gay entertainment from 6pm-midnight for £9.99 a month), Channel 4 Film Club (independent films from early 1999), The Racing Channel (which will also start Sunday coverage in October) and six religious channels from Christian Channel Europe.

Soft porn channels The Adult Channel (TAC), Television X, Playboy and Gay TV will initially simulcast their existing analogue services, but all four hope to start daytime services later this year if the ITC gives them the go-ahead. Pay-per-view versions of TAC and Playboy will also continue.

Sky Digital is already 14 times larger than what has been proposed by rival terrestrial digital TV provider ONdigital, so it has to be the favourite to attract the greater number of viewers ●





● *Films, documentaries, sport and comedy will all be offered in Sky's digital package*

## SKY DIGITAL'S TV LINE-UP

This is the line-up of channels to be offered within Sky's digital package this autumn. Stations which are not confirmed are shown in brackets and those which are launching later have their projected start dates shown after their names. Where channels are expanding their hours, the new times are shown.

**● PACKAGE CHANNELS**

The History Channel (noon-midnight)
[.tv] (6pm-10pm)
Discovery Channel (18 hours/day)
Home & Leisure (18 hours/day)
Animal Planet (9am-midnight)
Time-shifted Discovery
Discovery Showcase 1
Discovery Showcase 2
Discovery Showcase 3
UK Gold
UK Arena
UK Horizons
UK Style
UK FM [Oct/Nov]
UK Gold 2 [Oct/Nov]
Living (18 hours/day)
Bravo (18 hours/day)
Trouble
Challenge TV (18 hours/day)
Tara (11.30am - midnight)
The Box (24 hours)
National Geographic Channel (noon-1am)
MTV UK
M2
3 x MTV multiplexes
VH-1
E! Entertainment [Oct]
Nickelodeon
Fox Kids
Sci-Fi Channel
Sky Soap
Sky Travel
Sky One A
Sky Premier
Sky Premier 2
Sky Premier 3
Sky Premier 4
Sky Premier Widescreen
Sky MovieMax
Sky MovieMax 2
Sky MovieMax 3
Sky MovieMax 4
Sky Cinema
Sky Cinema 2
Sky Sports 1
Sky Sports 2
Sky Sports 3
Sky Sports News (24 hours)
Disney Channel
Auction Channel [Spring 99]
Granada Breeze
Granada Men & Motors
Granada Plus
13th Street [Oct/Nov]
Shalom Channel [May 99]
Christian Channel Europe
Paramount Comedy
QVC
(Hallmark Entertainment)
(Screenshop)
(BET On Jazz)
(Magazine Channel)

**● FREE TO AIR: (*require viewing card)**

BBC One Northern Ireland*
BBC Two Wales*
BBC Two Scotland*
BBC Choice*
BBC Learning [from 1999]*
BBC News 24
Channel Four
Channel Five
Sky News
CNBC
Bloomberg UK
(Chinese News and Entertainment)

**● A LA CARTE/PPV SERVICES:**

50 Sky Box Office Channels
Manchester United TV (5pm-11pm)
The Racing Channel [Suns as well from Oct]
Shalom Channel [May]
Rainbow TV
The Adult Channel
Playboy TV
Television X
Gay TV
Channel Four Film Club
Christian Children's Channel [Oct]
Christian Music Television [Oct]
Christian Shopping Channel [Oct]
The Revival Channel [Oct]
The Worship Channel [Oct]
The Catholic Channel [Oct]

**● MUSIC CHOICE CHANNELS:**

10 *Basic Residential Channels* free within Sky Basic package:
Hit List
Generation Rock
Love Songs
Dance
Country
Jazz
Classical Favourites
Blues
Gold 70s & 80s
Easy Listening

34 *Premium Residential Channels* available for extra £4.99/month
Classic Rock
Soft Rock
Heavy Rock
Old Gold 50s and 60s
Soul Classics
Soul, Rhythm & Rhyme
Reggae
Latin
Progressive Dance
New Country
Jazz II
Big Band
Classic Symphonic
Opera & Vocal Works
Classical Baroque & Early Music
Classical Adventures
Musical
Film Music
New Age/Moods
Bella Italia
Les Grande Chansons
Children's Channel/Singer & Standards
Spirit of Ireland
Turk Muzzik
Arabe
Sounds of India
World Music
Deutscher Rock
Les Tubes Francais
Schlager
Volksmusik
Vlaanderen Muziekland
Holland's Popular
Hit Kanal Norden

# Under the digital bonnet

● Pace was first from the stalls with its Digibox design

***Malcolm Brown sneaks a preview of the set-top boxes we are promised for Sky's digital TV service***

Sky has promised that 200,000 digital receivers will be available in the shops this autumn. They will retail for the remarkably low (and subsidised) price of £199, including the diminutive new dish required and installation.

Existing Sky subscribers will be able to order a Digibox direct from Sky for £160 (with dish and installation).

The Sky Digiboxes themselves are specified, designed and built. This is the most powerful, complex and downright sexy digital satellite receiver ever built anywhere in the World.

The Digibox has taken years to develop and it should last the earliest of adopters for many years to come. One of the four manufacturers commissioned by Sky to make the receivers (Pace) has already delivered a limited number of units to Sky for tests. The other three manufacturers – Grundig, Panasonic and Amstrad – are not far behind with their versions.

The remote control handset – more essential with these receivers than any previous models because of the importance of Sky's electronic programme guide (EPG) – is also common to all four models.

Just one dish is to be supplied with the receivers. This is a dark-grey 45cm design from Channel Master. The 52x39cm mesh reflector, like Concentric's (now Raven's) Sidewinder dishes, is wider than it is tall (a reversal of conventional offset dish design) and it is fitted with a 0.9dB Cambridge universal LNB equipped with a special elliptical feedhorn which, together with the reflector shape, helps to eliminate unwanted interference from adjacent satellites.

LNB adjustment has been simplified with fixed skew settings of 4° and 8° either side of the default 13.5° skew for Astra 2A at 28.2°E.

The four set-top boxes are identical in circuit design because this was specified by Sky. The actual implementation as a circuit board and the design of the front and back panels is personal to each box manufacturer, although each design has to incorporate the same sockets and buttons.

The black Grundig receiver sports nine buttons and a long LED panel on its front panel, while Amstrad's system has a smart silver fascia with 12 buttons and no LED panel. Panasonic's charcoal receiver boasts nine buttons and an LED panel while Pace's – the first unit to see the light of day – has nine keys and four indicators.

● Grundig's box takes a different approach to external looks

## INNER SECRETS

Although all four receivers are not so different in looks to existing analogue

products, that's where the similarities end. Four indicators on the fascia show when the system is on standby, when mail from Sky is awaiting the user, when a remote control button has been pressed, and when the receiver's internal 28.8kbit/s modem is in use.

The front panel sports two card slots. The lower one is for a Sky Digital viewing card (similar in principle to the current analogue smart cards, but not compatible) and the second one is for a Mondex-type payment card. This enables viewers to pay for goods and services without having to telephone advertisers and give out credit card information. The receiver can hold the details of up to five family members to allow for real push-button armchair shopping.

**'On any scale, these are sophisticated units, taking satellite TV viewing a huge step forward'**

There's no flap over the card slots to lessen the chances of you leaving the Mondex card in place. Because these cards are 'charged' with value which can then be spent at suitable outlets (including the Digibox), leaving it in place is an invitation to thieves – like leaving a £5 note poking out of your letterbox!

Each receiver also sports nine buttons, four cursor keys and a Select key for navigating around the EPG and onscreen menu, one for standby and a trio to access the electronic TV guide and select interactive advertisements. The latter will (when BIB's interactive services get going) lead from certain conventional video advertisements to special data ads which will usually enable viewers to order more information about a product.

The receivers each have a single extended IF LNB input (tuneable between 950-2150MHz) with both 22kHz (band selection) and DiSEqC (LNB selection) control.

Not normally seen on analogue gear is the modem socket used for connection to a British Telecom phone socket for accessing the BIB interactive services. You don't need to have the receiver connected to a phone socket for simple TV viewing, but it is required to make full use of the PPV and interactive bits.

The Sky Digibox also has an RS232 serial data port for attaching a computer and a IEEE1394 expansion socket.

For connecting up your TV and VCR, the Digibox has Scart sockets and UHF loopthrough. A pair of stereo audio outputs is also provided for linking to a hi-fi or surround sound system.

Unique among receivers, the Digibox has two UHF outputs, one for the main TV under which it sits, and one to feed (via a length of co-ax cable) a secondary set in, say, the bedroom or kitchen.

Equally uniquely, this secondary socket also provides a (switchable) DC output to power accessories such as a remote control relay box at the second TV. The other half of the remote relay is incorporated into the Digibox, so for independent control of the receiver only an infrared receiver unit and a second handset are required.

In the receiver's 8Mb of Ram is 4Mb of 'Flash' Ram which holds the software. This can be overwritten by downloading new software over the air, allowing Sky in the future to upgrade all subscribers' receivers without home visits. Because this process is controlled by the NDS conditional access system, it will be possible for Sky to withhold update software from those who are no longer subscribing.

Also included is the Macrovision 7.01 copy-protection system which has been used for several years to prevent duplication of video tapes. As Sky is apparently only interested in preventing certain pay-per-view events being copied, this signal encoding is presumably remotely switchable by software. (It is, at any rate, simply bypassed with small adapter boxes costing around £50).

## INTO THE UNKNOWN

Finally, a note for those wanting a subsidised Sky Digibox to form the jumping-off point for their digital exploration of the heavens: although they have DiSEqC for LNB control (and teletext support for channels not implementing the Sky EPG), it's unlikely that the Sky receivers will be much use in this area.

The degree of tuning control is not yet known, but as the Digibox automatically searches for the Sky transponders on Astra 2A, little manual control is expected.

The receivers' symbol rate range of 20,000-30,000 limits the choice of channels off Astra's 'old' position at 19.2°E or the new one at 28.2°E. Indeed, the whole class of single channel per carrier (SCPC) channels which use symbol rates much lower than 20,000 will not be receivable, nor will many others that do not use the 'standard' 27,500 symbol rate.

With the current battles between Sky, ONdigital and even the ITC, it is likely that these receivers are only the first generation of Sky digital set-top boxes, and new equipment may well go on sale just a few months later.

However, that's not to say that these four first digital receivers are in any way unfinished. On any scale, these are sophisticated units, taking satellite TV viewing a huge step forward ●

● *The digital dish is smaller than previous Astra antennas*

# Map of the

***Sky's digital service relies on the Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) to help you decide what you watch and get interactive. We take a look at the control system that is quite unlike anything seen on our TV screens before***

The imminent digital TV revolution is something that has been trumpeted from the rooftops by the likes of Sky and BDB. We're promised around 200 channels (including 60 MCE radio stations), advanced picture and sound quality, with the prospect of interactive services to play with as well.

Although this is all mouth-watering stuff, it's the Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) which has so far commanded much of the attention.

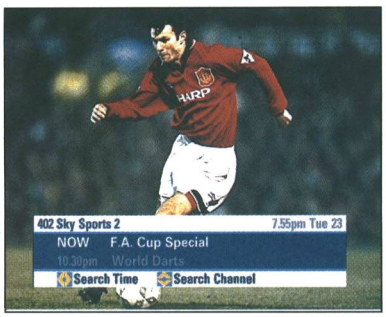
We're used to Ceefax, Teletext and Skytext, but Sky's EPG will be like nothing we've ever encountered. It will allow us to access onscreen menus and graphics, while also giving us the chance to structure our viewing schedule at the touch of a button. No nonsense access to TV listings, programme information and (eventually) interactive services can also be easily reached, thanks to the EPG.

Under construction since 1995, the EPG software has cost Sky a great deal of money to produce and incorporate into its digital package. The prototype has already been tested on 250 members of the public, both Sky subscribers and non-subscribers. Sky concluded that most of its guinea pigs were able to navigate around the EPG menus without too much trouble and 70 per cent managed to 'learn' their way around the system in 15 minutes.

All these flash menus and extra features may be all well and good, but many people will ask why we need yet another information network.

The simple answer is that as more digital channels join different packages we'll need a system to help us sort through and keep a tight rein on the programmes we want to watch.

Along with the new receivers, there will also be a special remote handset to accompany them. These handsets will be crucial for controlling not only all receiver functions, but also the EPG. Apart from dedicated buttons for TV Guide, Services, Box Office and Interactive (the EPG's four main strands), there's also a Select button and cursor keys which are designed to access different menu pages ●



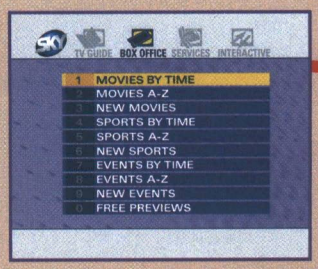

## BOX OFFICE

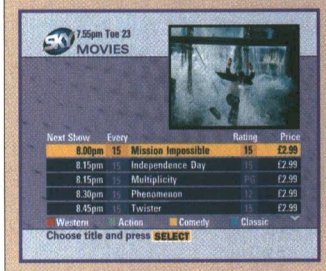
Because Box Office's pay-per-view (PPV) services are set to snowball when the digital services starts, the EPG will be essential for viewing specific PPV listings and, eventually, booking what you want to watch.

After you've accessed the Box Office menu, you'll find that listings are split up into movies, sports and events. From there, programmes are listed according to their times.

Free previews will give a glimpse of what's on the Box Office channels, while previews, time and price will also appear when individual film information is requested.

You will be able to push a button on the remote control to order PPV services directly through the EPG.





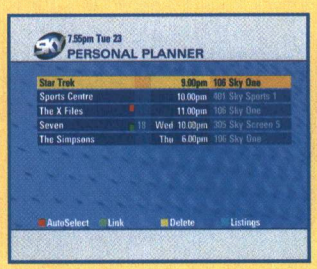

## TV GUIDE

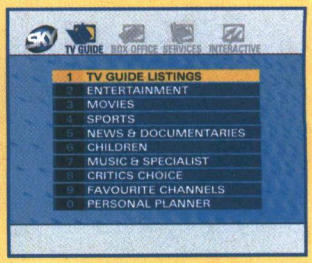
After punching the TV Guide button on the remote control, you'll find there are several ways to view listings.

You can either access a complete list of the 200 channels and go from there, or search through the channels after they have been broken up into bite-sized genres.

When it comes to accessing specific programmes, Sky's resident group of TV critics will provide daily critic's choices, while Favourite Choice will allow the viewer to create folders containing their 10 favourite channels (much like the Favourite lists of most analogue receivers).

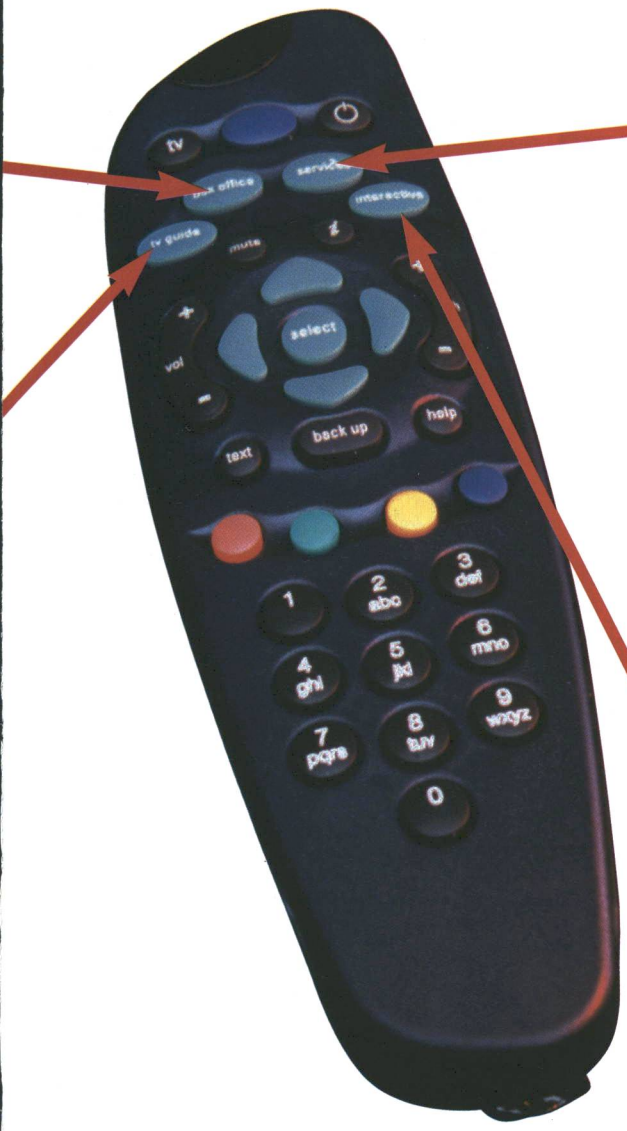
A Personal Planner will allow viewers to pre-select and flag programmes from the weekly schedules. Reminder messages will come up on screen during



# future

● *If you like sport (or The Simpsons) the Personal Planner will come in handy*

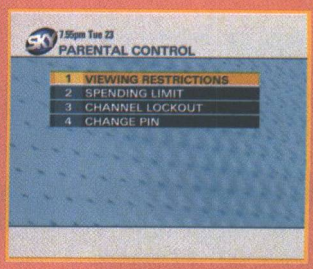


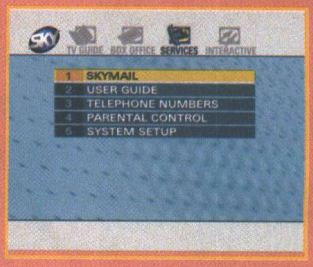

## SERVICES

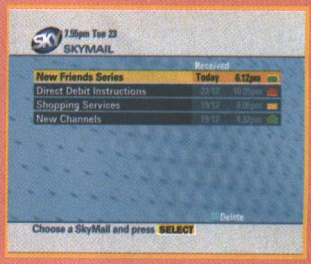
The Services menu will be crucial to Sky subscribers for keeping in contact with the company and checking on on their accounts.

The main Services menu has five options that begin with Skymail (the service name may change). Although it's only a one-way e-mail service, it allows Sky to keep in regular contact with its subscribers, relaying the latest information about PPV events, new Sky services and special offers. From here the viewer can also cast an eye over their subscription account and, in the future, pay their bills using the EPG.

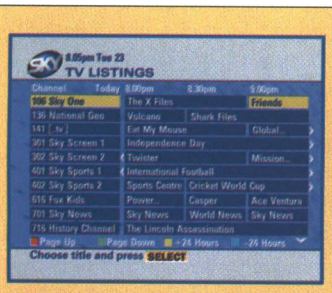
The User Guide provides a step-by-step guide to how the EPG works, while Parental Control allows parents to place restrictive bars over any film with, for instance, a 15 classification, or any other programme they desire.

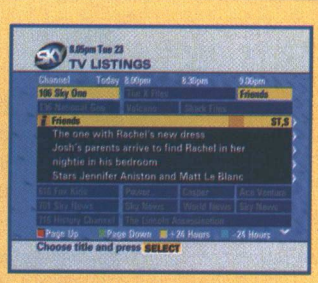



**'A Personal Planner will allow viewers to pre-select and flag programmes from the weekly schedules'**




the week – and when the flagged programme is about to start.

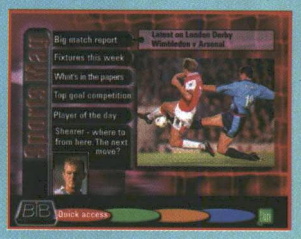
Channel listings will show programmes an hour-and-a-half ahead, but viewers can also access information that covers the next seven days.

## INTERACTIVE

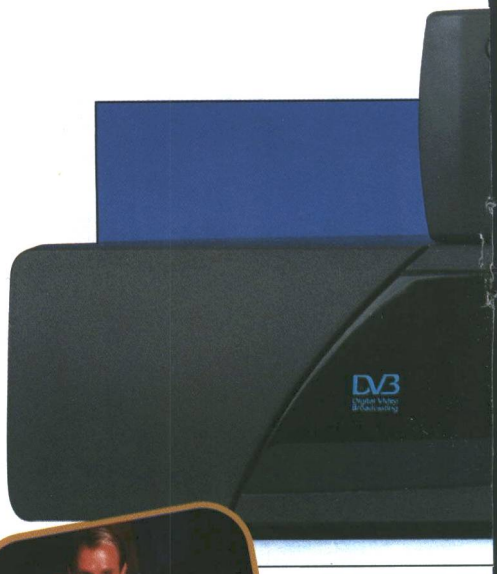
The final EPG option button will allow the viewer to access the interactive services the EPG will eventually provide.

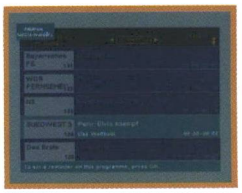
The sample screen is a prototype of the services that Sky, together with British Interactive Broadcasting (BIB), will lay on for the viewer.

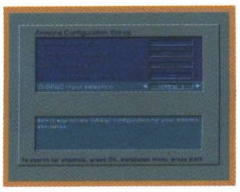
The likes of home shopping, banking and other public services are not a million miles away

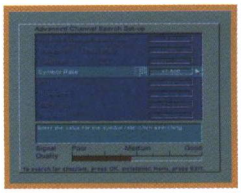


# Major league









● *Improved menus make the 9600S easier to use*

***If you're looking for digitial satellite TV, but not from Sky - Nokia's 9600S ain't half bad, says Malcolm Brown***

Nokia was the first company to produce a digital receiver for the UK. The Mediamaster 9200S met with some acclaim, but was nevertheless lacking in a few areas. The Mediamaster 9600S is Nokia's answer to the criticisms and the latest DVB digital receiver to reach these shores.

The 9600S looks identical to its predecessor, and indeed to the rest of the Mediamaster family – which includes the receivers for the German DF-1/Premiere package, Tele Plus in Italy, and so on. It's sleek and stylish.

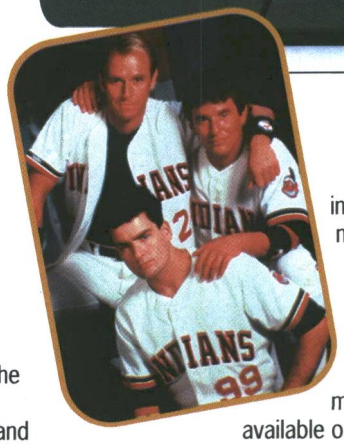
The front panel is entirely bare except for an acrylic window through which shines the green fluorescent alphanumeric display. This shows the time when the unit is on standby, the channel name when watching a programme, and various other things when setting up the receiver. All control over the receiver is exercised with the elegant and comfortable remote handset and the computer-like onscreen menus.

The back panel has a single LNB socket, stereo audio outputs, 0/12V switching output, three Scart sockets to connect to TV, VCR and an existing analogue receiver, and SCSI and RS232 interfaces for additional equipment. There are no UHF connections and the 9600S's pictures can only be viewed on a TV via a Scart cable.

The central section of the front panel folds down to reveal buttons for power and channel up/down. These are pretty much redundant on a digital receiver capable of picking up hundreds of channels, but they're there anyway. Also behind this flap is a slot. This is not a smart card slot since the 9600S is supplied with no conditional access module (CAM) inside it. It is only capable of picking up the unscrambled 'free-to-air' digital channels.

It is a large slot for a 'Common Interface', a PCMCIA-type slot of a spec agreed by all interested parties which takes plug-in CAM modules. So the 9600S can be upgraded with any CAM available in the common interface format to act as an IRD. Indeed, the first main market for this machine is Scandinavia, with a Viaccess common interface CAM for reception of the digital BBC package of BBC Prime and BBC World.

Ingeniously, these CAM modules can be made with a card slot onboard so when the module is installed in the 9600S, the card slot behind the front panel flap leads into the CAM module.

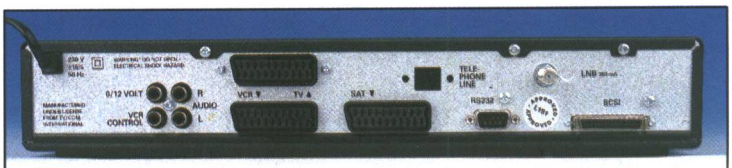


## FIRST DEFENCE

But don't expect CAM modules to be available on every street corner. The broadcasters use the different CAM types as a first defence against unofficial reception of their channels outside the regions for which they are intended. Common interface CAM modules are not so easy to come by. What's more, it's extremely unlikely that there will ever be a CAM module available for the Sky digital package. Sky is keeping the hardware for that under tight control.

The socket for a built-in CAM (such as the Irdeto CAM in a d-box) is similar to the CI but a CAM intended for internal use won't work when plugged into the CI socket. Nor does the 9600S take kindly to a built-in CAM module inside. Although it has the socketry on its circuit board to take such a unit, it doesn't respond when one is installed.

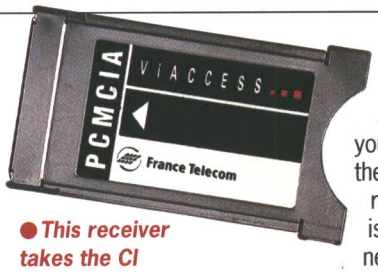
So, in effect, for most UK users the 9600S is just another free-to-air digital receiver. As such, it's the same as the 9200S but there are other improvements in this machine. For a start, this one is




● *Still no UHF loopthrough but the 9600S bristles with other interfaces*

***Multi-feed capability, common interface, no bouquet limit***

***No LNB loopthrough. Not so easy for multi-satellite owners***




● *This receiver takes the CI CAMs now coming on the market*

DiSEqC-compatible. It can use the down-the-LNB-cable signalling system to switch between different LNBs or dishes pointed at different satellites. This is pretty vital for easy UK use. There are many digital channels on both Astra and Eutelsat 13°E (not to mention groups of them on other satellites too) and many viewers want to use a digital receiver with a multi-feed antenna to access as many channels as possible.

Eight different configurations for LNBs/dishes/satellites can be defined. For each you specify a name (such as Hot Bird), the LNB local oscillator frequency, the status for the 0/12V switching output and the status for the DiSEqC control. When you want the receiver to search for digital channels, you specify which configuration to look in. Once the channels are found and stored, selecting a channel to watch calls up the relevant configuration and the correct LNB or dish.

A simple dual-feed antenna can be handled by the 0/12V switch or a mini-DiSEqC switch. If a full level 1 or level 2 DiSEqC switch is used, up to four separate LNBs can be used.

There's still no catering for sharing an LNB with an analogue receiver (no IF loopthrough) so you will need something like Global's Smart Priority Switch. And if you want to add this machine to a motorised setup, then life is almost as complicated as it ever was (although some judicious use of the configuration setups and some clever hardware could be pressed into service for some relief).

Otherwise, the 9600S is much as the previous Mediamasters, that is to say, not half bad. The receiver automatically searches for the channels on Astra or Hot Bird when you first install it. More channels can be added later, as they start up quite simply, and you can find channels on other satellites by specifying the transponder frequency, symbol rate and FEC. The 9600S will also happily accept the low symbol rates used by single channel per carrier (SCPC) broadcasts.

## NO LIMITS

The 9600S can also be set to find channels on other transponders in the same bouquet and you can specify the packet identifiers (PIDs) for the channels in the search menu.

Most usefully, there's no limit to the number of bouquets that can be tuned in. As long as you have LNBs connected and configured to receive them, any number of channels will be found and accessed at will.

Once you have all the channels you want stored in the 9600S's memory, watching them is a pleasure. Channels are selected either by number (it's unlikely you'll use this), by stepping through them in order, or from a menu of all the channels stored. Digital radio stations are handled in another list and you switch from TV to radio with two dedicated buttons on the remote control.

The name of the channel is automatically displayed and (if the data is available) the name and nature of the current and next programme can be called up too. What's on other channels in the same bouquet can also be displayed and an alarm set to remind you when another programme starts.

As well as these electronic programme guide (EPG) functions, the 9600S can access the simple teletext pages broadcast with some channels. This is simpler now, with a couple of presses of the Text key.

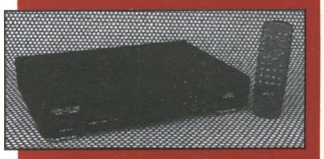
Although this is a common interface receiver, it's unlikely that this will have much impact on UK users – at least for a while – and the 9600S will effectively be used as a free-to-air receiver.

But that's not to denigrate it at all. The increased flexibility of multi-LNB handling, the lack of a bouquet limit to its tuning, the inclusion of PIDs in the search menus and, of course, the excellent picture and sound quality turned in by this receiver means that for free-to-air viewing, the Mediamaster 9600S is currently the one to have ●

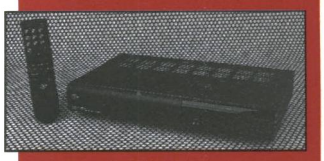
## SPECIFICATIONS

**Model:**
Nokia Mediamaster 9600S
**Receiver price:**
£529
**LNB inputs:**
1, extended IF, 22kHz tone
**LNB loopthrough:**
no
**DiSEqC:**
yes
**CAM:**
none
**Common interface:**
yes
**Symbol rate range:**
1000-45000
**Selectable FEC:**
yes
**Teletext:**
yes
**EPG support:**
yes
**UHF modulator tuning:**
n/a
**Expansion bus:**
yes
**Modem:**
none
**AV outputs:**
TV, VCR Scarts, analogue receiver Scart, stereo audio
**Supplier:**
Nokia Multimedia Network Terminals, Bridgemead Close, Westmead, Swindon SN5 7TS. Tel: 01793 556000

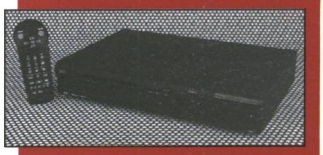
## THE OPPOSITION



● **Galaxis SAT500IRD**
Cheaper, with CI and Irdeto CAM but nine-bouquet tuning limit



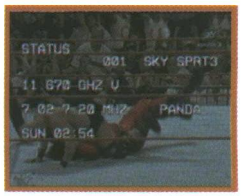
● **Pace DSR200**
Similar price with no CAM or CI. Four-bouquet limit to tuning



● **Philips DSI17B**
Supplied with Seca cam, no CI but multi-bouquet tuning

# The last action hero

**Grundig wants to depart the analogue market with its head held high - but will its penultimate system allow it to do this? Mark Newman has the answers**



● *The sensible, easy-to-follow menu makes setting up and using the system a dream*

The digital TV age is finally upon us, so it's hardly surprising that demand for analogue satellite receivers is on the wane. But that shouldn't necessarily be the case; there are still many reasons to get an analogue system.

For a start, the most basic systems already offer more than 40 channels (which is more than double the planned offering of digital terrestrial broadcaster ONdigital!) and some of these are free.

Because the broadcasters have invested millions of pounds in building up their analogue audiences, they are unlikely to jeopardise this by switching to digital overnight. Indeed, SES, owner of the Astra satellites, expects analogue to continue for at least another 5-7 years.

## TRADE-IN PLEDGE

What's more, Sky has pledged that its analogue subscribers will be able to trade in their systems for new digital ones at a vastly reduced price this autumn. So joining the analogue ranks is not so daft after all; you'll get an impressive array of channels and you may also save cash later.

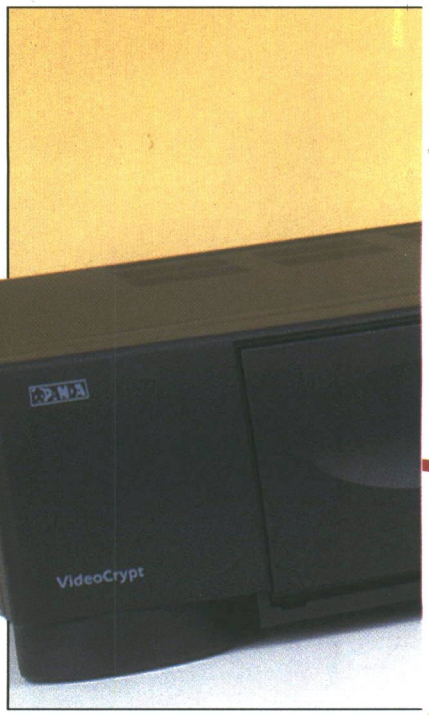
With this in mind, Grundig has raised the curtain on its last-but-one analogue receiver, the STR300T. (The final one is the GSR2, which *What Satellite TV* will test soon).

This system might look new but it has much in common with the GRD300, one of Grundig's best-selling mid-range systems. There's still a line-up of 300 channels, a decent range of features and a top-notch AV performance.

Little has changed around the back either. There are three Scart sockets for TV, VCR and decoder, a UHF loopthrough, a pair of LNB inputs (with extended IF tuning between 950-2150MHz) and stereo audio outputs.

The one improvement is the removal of the screwdriver-adjustable UHF tuning screw, which has at last been replaced by an easier-to-use electronic version controlled through the menus.

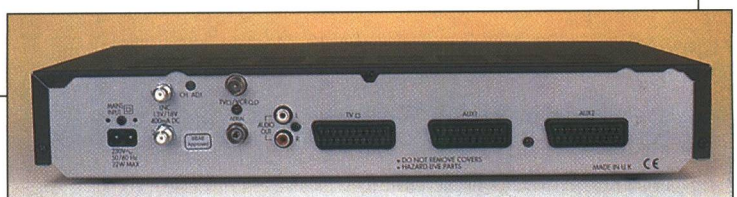
Behind the 'drawbridge-style' flap on the left of the front fascia are four buttons (for controlling power and channel changing), plus a single Videocrypt card slot. It's pleasing to note that the flap is of a much sturdier design than Grundig's other recent models.



● *Like Arnie, the STR300T acquits itself well*

Setting up the system is a hassle-free process, owing to a new remote handset (which doubles up as a universal remote if you have Grundig TVs or VCRs) and an intuitive and friendly menu. Having selected the LNC (Low Noise Converter) Menu, your LNB's details can be stored. Six setups for universal and standard LNBs, plus those which use DiSEqC and LNB switching devices, are preset – but manually entering your own local oscillator frequencies is also an option.

Although the STR300T has no socketry to control a positioner or motorised dish, the system can still be used for multi-satellite viewing. The inclusion of DiSEqC (version 1.0) switching allows it to control four LNBs on one dish – and the



● Three Scarts and a pair of of LNB inputs appear at the rear

presence of a second LNB input on the rear panel makes multi-feed viewing possible.

Indeed, the system comes pre-programmed with popular channels from both Astra and 13°E. In our test we linked up the STR300T to Echostar's DSB9800 free-to-air digital receiver and within minutes we were watching the 24-hour digital feed of Fashion TV from 13°E. Similarly, there were no problems using a Philips Mac decoder either; the STR300T's Decoder Menu lets you alter the Video settings between PAL, Baseband and Mac.

The closure of several analogue channels, such as Sky Scottish and Country Music Television, means you'll find it is necessary to reset the programme line-up to prevent the onscreen channel names not correlating with pictures on your TV. By selecting the Channel Tuning Menu and following the step-by-step instructions in the manual, it will update in no time.

## CHANNEL CHOICE

Once it is up and running, you may feel brave enough to store your most-watched channels in the Favourites Channels menu. This lets you store up to 20 channels in four categories – news, sport, movies and family – and enables the stations to be quickly accessed in future.

That's the theory at any rate. In reality, the channels can be selected only by pressing the remote's 'P-' key, followed by the right arrow button. It would be far easier if the remote had a dedicated Favourite Channel button.

Any channel you deem unsuitable for viewing in your home (such as a porn channel) can be blocked using the parental control function. This requires a four-digit PIN number to be entered whenever the blacklisted station is selected. If an incorrect number is given, the screen remains solid blue. A separate menu lock is also provided.

Other features include 15 audio settings (between 5.50-9.99MHz), 50µs and J17 de-emphasis, plus Wegener Panda noise reduction. There's also radio screen blanking, a four-event/28-day timer (with a weekly repeat option for soap fans) and, strangely, a pay-per-view card authorisation facility (even though Sky Box Office uses a quite different telephone ordering system instead).

The STR300T's sound performance really is hard to fault. It benefits from the inclusion of true Wegener, suffering very little background noise, and the bass and trebles are perfectly balanced. It's a pleasure to listen to.

And, as you might expect, Grundig has got the video performance right too. No fuzzy images or video noise here.

The pictures are sharp and well-coloured, and show plenty of fine detail.

The STR300T, therefore, has much going for it. Filled with features and easy to use, it provides a top-notch performance. Although it is not ideal for those wanting full multi-satellite operation, it can nonetheless be easily adapted for dual-feed viewing of analogue, Mac and free-to-air digital channels. It's heartily recommended ●

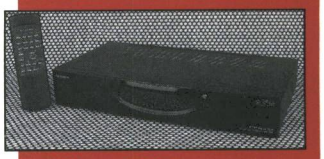
***Plenty of features, well-priced, with a great performance***

***Limited multi-satellite capabilities and a tricky Favourite Channels facility***

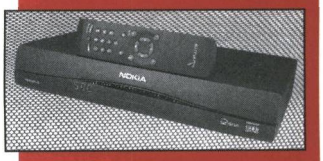
## SPECIFICATIONS

**Model:**
Grundig STR300T
**Receiver price:**
£175
**60cm system price:**
-
**80cm system price:**
-
**Channels:**
300
**Decoder:**
Videocrypt
**LNB inputs:**
two, extended IF, 22kHz switching
**Wegener audio:**
Yes
**Audio subcarrier range:**
5.50-9.99MHz
**Onscreen display:**
Channel naming, tuning
**Event timer:**
Four-event/28-day
**Parental lock:**
PIN operated
**Outputs:**
TV, VCR and decoder Scarts, stereo audio
**Contact:**
Grundig, Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 1RX. Tel: 0181-324 9400

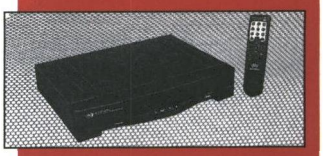
## THE OPPOSITION



● **Maspro ST-12**
£25 cheaper, with better-looking front panel display, no Wegener and fewer features




● **Nokia SAT1800 Satscan**
£100 more, but includes 200 extra channels and dedicated multi-satellite socketry



● **Pace MSS300**
£35 more, with 50 fewer channels, wideband IF tuning and a similarly large features roster

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# 22 OCT. 1998

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CAMBRIDGE AE54 GOLD UNIVERSAL 0.7db LNB's £19 each, New AE57 0.6db PLATINUM UNIVERSAL LNB's £35, GRUNDIG TWIN UNIVERSAL 0.7db £44 , C120 0.7db Cambridge £29

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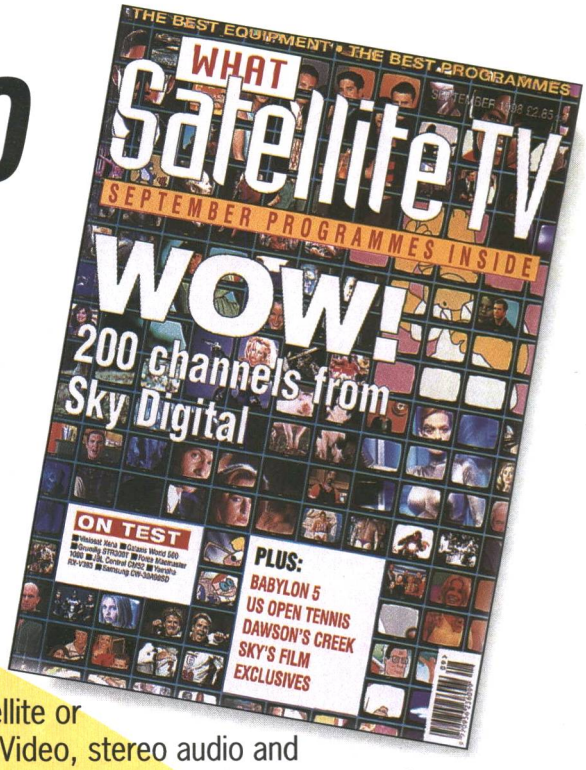
# Time to switch to

# WHAT Satellite TV

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# This is hardcore

***What Satellite TV probes into the satellite porn industry to find out which are the hottest channels on the box***

Sex, sauce, jazz, bonking... whatever you want to call it, sex on satellite is here to stay and is likely to become an even bigger proposition when digital channels offer extra space to those channels you always watch but would never admit watching.

Although there are three main adult-oriented channels (Television X, Playboy TV and The Adult Channel) in Britain, a trawl through the foreign Astra channels and other satellites will always turn up something naughty – from full-on hardcore sex to the cheeky seaside postcard-style *Confessions Of A Taxi Driver*.

But, as ever, there's more than meets the eye when it comes to sex on satellite. The three main UK channels are bound by law not to show anything that 'might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors' (Article 22 of EC Broadcasting Directive). This includes shots of sexual penetration.

So though UK pay channels contain slightly watered-down material, they are nonetheless scrambled. As for the European hardcore channels (remember, they could be made illegal at any moment), specific cards and equipment are needed.

You can argue whether sex on satellite is morally correct and whether the actual content is exploitative until the cows come home. The fact is that sex on satellite is big business and readily available, so read our extensive guide and turn on, tune in and get turned on! ●

**The Adult Channel**
**Astra (19.2°E)**
**11.568GHz/V**
**Encryption: Videocrypt 1**
**Porn: Nightly from midnight-4am**

**Comment:** Restricted by the rules, The Adult Channel nonetheless culls its programmes from around the world but doesn't show those down-and-dirty penetration shots. Like Television X, The Adult Channel also mixes girl-next-door DIY-style homegrown shows like *Wet T-Shirt* and the *New Model Files*. Recently started pay-per-night services and has gay films.
**Hot or not?** 👄👄👄

**Bravo**
**Astra (19.2°E)**
**11.097Ghz/V**
**Encryption: Videocrypt 1**
**Porn: Nightly, after midnight**
**Comment:** Most people associate Bravo with cult TV and Lad TV, but the cheeky channel also has a few softcore series hidden away after midnight.

*Red Shoe Diaries* and *Beverly Hills Bordello* are American soft-focus affairs, while *Italian Stripping Housewives* is perhaps the campest and funniest show on satellite TV.
**Hot or not?** 👄👄

**Canal Plus**
**Intelsat 707 (1°W)**
**11.261GHz/H, Intelsat 707, Thor 1/2(1°W), 11.107GHz/V (Dig)**
**Encryption: D2-Mac Eurocrypt S2**
**Porn: Nightly from midnight-4am**

**Comment:** In

**Sarah Allen,**
**Hardcore porn star and The Adult Channel presenter**

I got into it by coming to London, really. I used to be a policewoman and came to London to do some singing. I then started going to a couple of photographers and did topless, and it went on from there. Now I do the full monty! I don't mind being called a porn star, that's what I do!

We have full sex. It's difficult with the film crew there, but it's not as hard for the girl as it is for the guy. It's fun, but it is hard... ooer!

Depending on who it's with, it can be an erotic experience on camera. It really does depend on who you're with, just like in normal life. If you fancy them or not. If you're doing it with someone you're not keen on, you just have to close your eyes and think of something else! That's when you really have to make an effort. If it's with someone you like, it's absolutely brilliant!

among blockbuster film premieres Canal Plus throws in babes and hunks going at it from every position possible. Mainly US output, but still hard-as-nails hardcore.
**Hot or not?**

**Eros TV**
**Eutelsat II F1 (13°E)**
**11.658GHz/V**
**Encryption: D2-Mac Eurocrypt S2**
**Porn: Nightly, midnight-4am**

**Comment:** Nothing is left to the imagination as the grunts and groans come alive with pictures. Although American-owned, it's the European flavour of this fairly new channel that's popular. Its hardcore content has now propelled it into the same notoriety league as Eurotica Rendez-Vous. Has gay content and could be proscribed at any moment.
**Hot or not?**

**Eurotica Rendez-Vous**
**Eutelsat 11 F1 (13°E)**
**11.280GHz/V**
**Encryption: D2-Mac Eurocrypt S2°**
**Porn: Nightly from midnight-4am**
**Comment:** The plot and storyline have been ditched in favour of non-stop action (both heterosexual and homosexual). It may be a French station, but as it has titles like *Le Gang Bang*, you'll quickly get to grips with the goings-on. Eurotica Rendez-Vous is also a veteran when it comes to tangling with proscription orders and the UK government.
**Hot or not?**

**Gay TV**
**Astra (19.2°E)**
**10.979GHz/V**
**Encryption: Videocrypt 1**
**Porn: Nightly 4am-5.30am**
**Comment:** Although The Adult Channel has some gay content, Television X spin-off Gay

**Katherine Mackin**
**Head Of Programming, Bravo**

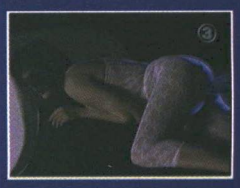
I've inherited a lot of stuff. What I've tried to do – maybe it's because of the female thing – is try to go for a lot more innuendo stuff like *Italian Stripping Housewives* and films I've recently bought include *Confessions Of A Window Cleaner*. They're very cheesy, with hardly any sex in them at all, that's the irony. I think we're changing the policy slightly with programming that's not as overtly sexual.

We're trying to stay away from the American Shannon Tweed stuff which is on Sky and now Channel 5. We're now going for a more British style of humour.

I've come from family programming, so I'd never actually seen a saucy video until I came to Bravo, and it was very strange. I'm certainly no expert, or sexpert! I'm very happy with the guidelines, and they're strong enough for what we want to do. We are a general entertainment channel, but any channel that's viewed by men in the 16-34 age bracket will want sexual content. There was one with fetish stuff and Nazis. I can't remember the title. I found it really offensive and wouldn't show it on Bravo in a million years.

## BEST OF THE REST

**Sat1**
Astra 11.288GHz/V clear
Occasional soft porn from 1970s on Saturday nights
Hot or not?



**TV3 Sweden**
Intelsat 707 11.597GHz/V
D2-Mac/Eurocrypt M
Occasional sex documentaries and soft porn films on Sat and Sun nights
Hot or not?

**Granada Men & Motors**
Astra 11.244GHz/H
Videocrypt
Girlie-ish shows every Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat from 11pm-1am
Hot or not?

**Channel 5**
Astra 10.921GHz/H Soft Videocrypt
Soft porn films of varying age every Saturday night
Hot or not?

**Vox**
Astra 11.273GHz/H clear
Soft porn flicks on Saturday nights
Hot or not?

**Rai Due**
Hot Bird 11.449GHz/V clear
Scantily clad women parade around on game shows on Saturday nights
Hot or not?

**Blue Movies**
Astra 12.559GHz/H Digital/Irdeto
Soft porn films every Sunday night as part of Germany's DF1 package
Hot or not?

**XXL**
Astra 12.266GHz/H Digital/Seca
Soft/hardcore porn every night from 11pm as part of France's ABSat package
Hot or not?

**Living**
Astra 10.979GHz/V
Late sex discussions and explicit porn-vérité
Hot or not?

**Arte**
Astra 10.714GHz/H
A fair quota of late-night flesh... it's all art, don't you know !?!
Hot or not?

**RTL2**
Astra 11.214GHz/H
After midnight at the weekends you'll find soft-core on show
Hot or not?

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TV is the first UK sex channel devoted to homosexual men. Although it keeps within the ITC guidelines, there are non-penetration films and actor Christopher Biggins hosts a gay version of *Blind Date*!
**Hot or not?**

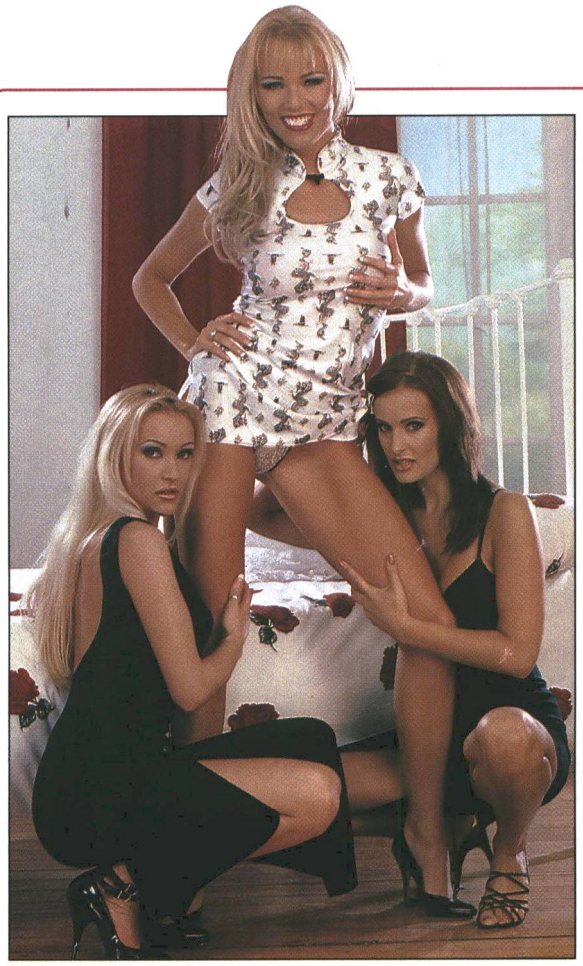
**Playboy TV**
**Astra (19.2°E)**
**11.671GHz/V**
**Encryption: Videocrypt 1**
**Porn: Mon-Thurs 11.30pm-4am, Fri-Sun midnight-4am**

**Comment:** Its well-known mother company in the US helps out, so it's no wonder that Playboy TV in the UK boasts top stars like Pamela Anderson, Jenny McCarthy and Anna Nicole Smith regularly baring all.

The most glamorous of the three UK sex channels, it also pioneered the concept of *Night Calls* – in which members of the public call a live phone-in show to reveal their sexual fantasies and sometimes act them out on air. It also has famous British names (Kathy Lloyd, Jo Guest and ex-*Neighbours* star Emma Harrison) stripping off too. Recently introduced pay-per night scheme.
**Hot or not?**

**SCT**
**Hot Bird (13°E)**
**Encryption: D2-Mac Eurocrypt S2**
**Porn: Nightly from midnight-4am**

**Comment:** The Italians live up to their reputation as hot lovers as they grunt their way through some scorching Euro hardcore. The only problem is that SCT has been proscribed so, if you do fancy some Italian stallion action, you'll not only have to buy the specific (and unfortunately named) Ping Pong decoder but also break the law.
**Hot or not?**



**Sky Movies**
**Astra (19.2°E) Screen 1: 11.436GHz/V, Screen 2: (11.479GHz/V)**
**Encryption: Videocrypt 1**
**Porn: Soft-porn after 11pm Fridays and Saturdays on Screen 1, and Thursdays on Screen 2**

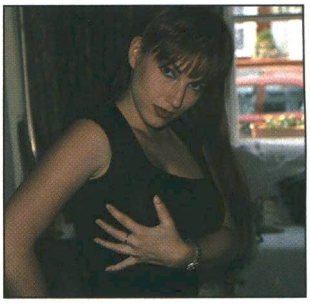
**Comment:** Hollywood's attempts at the erotic, like *Showgirls* and *Striptease*, alongside classic erotica like *Emmanuelle*. The latest US sex-thrillers, starring the likes of Shannon Tweed and Shannon Whirry, can be found in the wee hours.
**Hot or not?**

***Katie-Ann (above top) pushes the limits on TV-X, while The Adult Channel (right) also has homegrown shows***

*Thanks to Vision On and Heathrow Systems for the loan of viewing cards used to research this article.*

**Katie-Anne,**
**Strap-o-Gram girl, Television-X**
It's all good clean girlie fun. I think people who tune into the UK channels aren't getting what they want to see. With Strap-o-Gram it's a bit like a kiss-o-gram, but slightly different! It pushes the rules to the limits. I basically go around to the house of a girl – it could either be a friend or a wife who has their husband's consent – who has always had a fantasy with being a woman. At the end of the session they're usually so turned on they really want to see a big erect willy, and that's where I come in.

At the start, after I'd auditioned for the part, it was really odd. But now I know the camera crew it's jolly good fun and it's a real challenge!



**Television X**
**Astra (19.2°E)**
**10.979GHz/V**
**Encryption: Videocrypt 1**
**Porn: Nightly from midnight-4am**

**Comment:** Arguably the raunchiest and most popular British adult channel because of its reliance on girl-next-door scenarios. It has a strong line-up of homegrown stars like *Shagnasty And Muttley*, *Superdick*, *Pussy Malone* and the infamous Strap-o-Gram girl (who gets around the no erect penises law by having fun with sexual aids). You can guess the rest.
**Hot or not?**

**TV1000**
**Intelsat 707 (1°W)**
**11.054GHz/V**
**Encryption: D2-Mac Eurocrypt S2**
**Porn: Nightly from midnight-4am**

**Comment:** This general entertainment channel shows the likes of *Star Trek* during the day and evening, but takes off its trousers and pants after midnight to indulge in some serious European and Scandinavian entertainment. No wonder it was voted Favourite Foreign Channel in our recent end of year polls.
**Hot or not?**

**Roger Ginsberg**
**President, Eurotica Rendez-Vous**
Hardcore caters to a certain minority of the public. Whether it's entertaining is a difficult question. If you ask my opinion, I will say that it's a service that the public demands. We don't see hardcore as something negative, we think that it's better than people running around the streets being dangerous. Countries such as Luxembourg have decided it is in the public's best interest! They've found that sex shops and pornography help people to get rid of certain impulses. You'd be surprised also at the amount of calls we have from spouses. They find it spices up their sex lives! It brings back some kind of memories.

Legally, we've had a warning about the potential proscription order from the National Heritage department based on the recommendation from the ITC in October last year.

We've put a number of questions to National Heritage which it hasn't answered and we are trying to establish what we have to do to avoid proscription. We believe that self-censorship is enough, but in the rest of Europe they are fine with this kind of programming. Canal Plus Digital has already taken our programmes on its digital platform and we are in their bouquet for Canal Plus Scandinavia. They started in May and we are on 1°W on Intelsat 707. We already have an agreement with Multichoice in Greece. We do have other negotiations with other digital packages happening at the moment.

The British are not laughed at, but many people do think that there is hypocrisy there, and that is due to the regulations.

*Richard Youlden breaks out the Ferrero Rocher for the Ambassador's receptions to preview the Sci-Fi Channel's Babylon 5*

# Diplomatic community

*Babylon 5*, the creation of J Michael Straczynski, stands alone, not only in the depths of space, but as television's first sci-fi novel. It is a grand five-year saga at least partly inspired by Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings*.

*Babylon 5* was first outlined during 1986/87. Although the storyline has been modified as better ideas have arisen and characters changed as actors departed, it remains largely faithful to the original plot.

Initially set in 2258, the action takes place on the five-mile long Babylon station – 2,500,000 tons of revolving metal housing 250,000 humans and aliens. It's a stopping-off point for ambassadors, businessmen, refugees, smugglers and other travellers.

The first three Babylon stations were sabotaged. The fourth vanished the day it became operational and the fifth is where Straczynski introduces us to his characters. The main political forces vying for supremacy aboard this intergalactic United Nations are the Earth Alliance (whose officers run the place), the Minbari Federation, Narn Regime, Centauri Republic and Vorlon Empire. Several non-aligned alien races also throw a spanner in the works.

Jeffrey Sinclair commands Babylon 5. He is a former fighter pilot troubled by 24 missing hours lost during the Battle Of The Line – the final showdown of the Earth/Minbari war 10 years earlier. Earth was defeated but, for unexplained reasons, the Minbari decided to sue for peace rather than press home their advantage.

Unlike many other TV series, *Babylon 5*'s characters grow, affected by their experiences. Although some of these changes are slight, others are extreme.

*Babylon 5* was using computer-generated effects long before it was commonplace. Each season demanded more complex sequences, stretching the technology. The result is a continually evolving visual feast.

*Babylon 5* is the biggest and best series to hit the Sci-Fi Channel for a long time and the best hope of wresting the *de facto* title of satellite sci-fi supremo from Sky One. Climb aboard, you won't regret it ●

● *Babylon 5 space station, ready for action*

## FACT FILE: BABYLON 5

- ***Babylon* 5 shows each weeknight on the Sci-Fi Channel at 9pm (it started on August 3, 1998 with the pilot film - re-cut with new effects)**
- **The series premiered on US syndicated TV during February 1993. It reached Channel 4 on May 16, 1994.**
- **Bill Mumy played Will Robinson in *Lost In Space*. Peter Jurasik was in *Hill Street Blues*. Steven Furst was in *St Elsewhere*. Walter Koenig played Chekov in *Star Trek***
- **The *Babylon* 5 official website is at: http://www.wb.com/frame_moz3_night.html Also try The Lurkers' Guide: http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/lurker.html**

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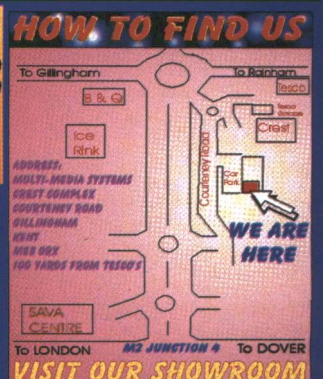


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